



## Grace-Full Women Bible Study Leader's Guide

**[Please provide:** copies of this Bible study, Bibles, hymnals]

**Opening Prayer:** Thank You, heavenly Father, for this opportunity to come together to study Your Word. As we contemplate Your will for us on our walk with You, lead us to see that Jesus' death and resurrection and Your grace for us through faith in You have freed us to live always and only for You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Take a moment to imagine you are pursuing the true path God desires you to follow. You are walking with God, step-by-step, as you glorify-His name in word and action. You live every day with purpose and passion. Along the way you know God is saying, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

How's that going for you? Are you following God's will for you right now? Encourage participants to share their responses.

What do you think God is leading you to do in His service? Encourage participants to share their responses.

What obstacle(s) in your life are preventing you from following God's will for you? Is it a person? A general distraction? A worldly limitation like money or time? Is it something that you are waiting to pass through like a phase of life? Or ... Encourage participants to share their responses. Emphasize that God desires us to serve Him in whatever our vocation may be. An individual might not need to change all that she is doing, but instead, she may need to examine the manner and focus with which her work is being done.

We often focus on what needs to change so that the time is right (in our own opinions) to follow where God is leading us. We may wait for our relationships to be fulfilling so that we are happy. We might play the part of grieved victims: that person won't stop behaving irresponsibly; the company for which you work isn't where it should be and you aren't getting the respect, freedom, or autonomy you have earned. We may feel that the world just can't seem to get its act together long enough for us to do the glorious work God has destined us to do. Sisters, attitudes and thoughts like these imprison us, and God has already set us free!

Let's pause for a moment and look at what Martin Luther faced in 1517. Three of the obstacles Luther faced in his walk with God were the **church**, the **traditions** of the times, and the **common language** of the majority of the other people who lived then.

### 1. The Church

In the **church** of Luther's time, the authority of broken people was taken as the authority of God. The church authorities neglected the Word of God and replaced its truths with their own falsehoods.

### 2. The Tradition

The **tradition** in Luther's day could be described as, "what was done had always been done, so it will be done forever." Or, "we've always done it this way, why change it now?" Those who thought otherwise were considered unwanted radicals.

### 3. The Common Language

The **common language** of many Christians in Luther's time was your actions add to or subtract from your eternal happiness. Misguided Christians believed that it was what you said and did that got you to heaven.

We are blessed that God worked through Martin Luther and led him to understand what is really true: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast* (Ephesians 2:8–9). By the power of the Holy Spirit, Martin Luther saw that God was good and full of grace. God gave Luther saving faith in the truth of Christ Jesus so he did not allow the world and its sinful inhabitants to limit the work God led him to do.

Think back to the obstacle or obstacles you listed earlier that you feel stand in your way from doing what God desires you to do. Is your obstacle like number one above? Is the authority of a broken person (you or someone else) or a broken organization deciding your success in following God's plan for you? Or is it like number two? Is the way things have been done for however many years is preventing your progress, understanding, and forward movement? Is something that used to glorify God lost its meaning or purpose? Perhaps your obstacle is number three. Words, actions, and thoughts matter and can quickly become habitual. Do you see a pattern that is limiting you or affecting you in a negative way? Has the devil twisted your understanding of the Gospel so that you believe good works equal-rewards? Circle the one of Luther's obstacles that is the most fitting to your situation. Tally participants' responses and note if Obstacle 1, 2, or 3 is most prevalent.

While we know that God's grace for us through faith in Christ Jesus is all that is needed for salvation, we still may allow the devil to imprison us in obstacles which we believe prevent us from following God and from doing the work He desires us to do for Him and for others. In the Bible, God tells us of His abundant grace for us and how He has freed us to live our lives for Him as "grace-full women".

Read Titus 2:11. Then complete the following statement: God's GRACE is a gift for all people.

God's plan of salvation is for ALL people, no matter their race, background, or nationality. Read: Luke 10:25–37. It is likely that the Samaritan in Jesus' parable represents Himself (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, CPH ©2009, study note on Luke 10:37, page 1735). How do the actions of the Samaritan mirror Christ's grace-full actions toward us?

Jesus came to serve and to save all people. Jesus pours out His grace and His healing help on all our ills and sins.

Read Ephesians 2:8. Complete this statement: God's GRACE is a gift for you.

God has given this gift not just for a blanket "everyone." He has given His gift of grace through faith in Christ Jesus personally to you. Through God's Word, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion, the Holy Spirit works in every believer the knowledge that God's grace is a beautiful gift. To know God's grace is to know that you have truly been forgiven for your sins. To know God's grace is to recognize that God had you in mind when He first promised a Savior in the Garden of Eden to rescue Adam and Eve and all people from eternal death (Genesis 3:15).

To know God's grace is to know He loves you unconditionally. God never forces you to return His affections. Instead, He calls after you relentlessly to know His love for you as He shows His love for you.

God knows how many hairs you have on your head. He knows your smile. He knows your strengths and your insecurities. Read Ephesians 2:10. What else does God know for you? God knows the works He has planned for us to do.

How might the words of Ephesians 2:10 give you comfort when you are faced with distractions that try to prevent you from following God's will for your life? God will work through any obstacle and will help us to accomplish what His good and perfect will is for us.

Read Ephesians 4:32. Complete this sentence: God's GRACE is for you to share with others. When we are confident and comfortable in God's arms as His loved and forgiven children, we are enabled by Him to love and forgive others. Through faith, as we trust in God who walks with us everywhere, we can grace-fully do the work that He gives us to do for Him.

Because of the work of Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection, sin has no power over us. Through Christ, we are freed from the brokenness, burdens, and distractions caused by sin. Because of Jesus, we are grace-full women who are free to follow God and to show others the same grace-full love God shows us as we follow His will for our lives.

Read Ephesians 5:2. Why can we *walk in love* the path on which God leads us? We love because he first loved us (1 John 4:19). Through His death and resurrection, Jesus has freed us from sin, death, the devil, and any obstacle that threatens to entangle us and keep us from fulfilling God's will for us. We are commanded by Jesus Himself to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:39b). The Holy Spirit works in us to lead us to show others the same self-sacrificing love that Jesus shows us.

What does this mean for you as a grace-full woman? Created by God to do good works, freed by Jesus from sin, death, and the devil, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we can joyfully show God's love and grace to all.

**Sing:** "Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow," LSB 805

**Closing Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank You for daily reminding us of Your love and grace through Your Word, the Sacraments, and through Your daily actions of care and protection in our lives. Forgive us for our lack of faith in Your grace. Help us to live as Your grace-full women, free in You from the limits of the world, from sin, and from the brokenness of people. Thank You for sending us into the world to share Your love and grace with others. Lead us to show Your love and grace to all as we walk with You on the path You have prepared for us. In Your name we pray. Amen.

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